Methodological approaches to Time Use Data Collection

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Measuring *activities* using time-use surveys

✓ Time-use surveys measure the time individuals devote to *activities*, understood in a very broad sense.

✓ Time-use surveys can have different objectives, i.e., be designed to study particular sets of activities. They are the only known way to measure *unpaid care work* but they have been used for other purposes.

✓ Some sociologists’ and feminist scholars’ criticism to this “quantitative” and “lineal” approach to time-use data collection, but this has lead to feminist economists’ contributions to measure *care*.

✓ Developing countries envision TUS as a way to better measuring the *informal economy*. 
A methodological approach to time-use data collection

I. Type of household survey;

II. Survey Design:
   a. type of survey instrument used for recording activities;
   b. activity selection; and
   c. mode of data collection.

III. Sample Design:
   a. coverage;
   b. reference period; and
   c. reference population, including unit of analysis.
I. Type of household survey

I.1 Stand-alone time-use survey:
Expensive surveys. Mainstreamed in developed countries. Usually tied to the availability of foreign funds in developing countries. New development in LA (Brazil, Venezuela).

I.2 Module attached to a multi-purpose household survey:
Living Conditions, Labor Force, or Income and Expenditure Surveys. The core survey methodological design imposes limits to the time-use module. There are advantages, though.
II. Survey design

Type of Survey Instrument

- Tasks/activity lists

Activity Selection

- Classification of Activities
- List of Activities

Mode of Data Collection

- Activity diary
- 24-hour recall activity diary
- Short tasks lists
- Stylised activity diaries
- Exhaustive activity lists

Survey Design

- 24-hour activity diary

Self-administered

Interview
II. Survey design

II.a Type of survey instrument:

- **Short tasks lists**: stylized questions that target the time devoted to specific tasks. Do not cover the entire day.

- **Stylized analog to diaries**: short and comprehensive listing of activities. Usually, one digit ICATUS. Difficulties to include pre-defined “simultaneous” activities.

- **Exhaustive activity list**: aimed at covering all possible activities, not only tasks. Fairly long (maybe too long).

- **24-hour activity diaries**: twenty-four-hour schedules, divided in fixed time slots (ten, fifteen or thirty minutes long) with room for 1, 2, or 3 activities in each of them. Captures simultaneous activities. Could be self-administered, but can also be filled in during interviews.
II. Survey design

- **Survey Design**
  - Type of Survey
  - Instrument
  - Tasks/activity lists

- **Activity Selection**
  - 24-hour activity diary
  - Classification of Activities
  - List of Activities

- **Mode of Data Collection**
  - Activity diary
    - Self-administered
    - 24-hour recall activity diary
    - Short tasks lists
    - Stylised activity diaries
    - Exhaustive activity lists
  - Interview
II. Survey design

Survey Design
- Type of Survey Instrument
  - Tasks/activity lists

24-hour activity diary

Activity Selection
- Classification of Activities
- List of Activities

Mode of Data Collection
- Activity diary
  - 24-hour recall activity diary
  - Short tasks lists
  - Stylised activity diaries
  - Exhaustive activity lists
- Interview

Self-administered
II. Survey design

II.b Activity selection:

- *Task/activity list design*: defining the length of the list (whether it should be exhaustive or not) and the level of detail. Inclusion/exclusion of different activities under broad categories (i.e., travelling). Problems of phrasing.

III. Sample design

III.1 Coverage: national or local.

III.2 Reference period: “yesterday”, “last week”. Seasonal variations.

III.3 Reference population: age limits.

III.4 Unit of analysis: the individuals (women and men), although some attempts to use households.
Trade-offs related to TUS design

✓ **Respondents’ burden versus fieldwork burden:** activity diaries minimize respondents’ burden, as opposed to exhaustive activity lists. But careful calibration of **fieldwork** is required (selection of individuals and days to collect information on), and might not be possible in the case of modules.

✓ **Surveying households (i.e., all individuals in the household) versus surveying individuals:** also related to response rates.

✓ **Considering simultaneous activities:** unsatisfactory way of dealing with simultaneous activities with instruments other than activity diaries.
Useful websites

✓ IATUR – International Association for Time Use Research
  http://www.iatur.org

✓ Centre for Time Use Research
  http://www.timeuse.org

✓ Time Use Statistics – ESCWA Gender Statistic Programme

✓ HETUS – Harmonized European Time Use Survey
  https://www.h2.scb.se/tus/tus

✓ Research Network on Time Use
  http://www.rntu.org/rntu_home.php